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## Dishing social media: How to speak the tweet

June 27, 2013 - Retail

Still think Twitter is for reading about what people ate for breakfast? If so, then continue reading. Twitter is a powerful tool that connects you to people you would not normally have access to. It's also an amazing search tool. Below I'll be talking about Twitter basics, how to compose a tweet for maximum engagement and the bigger picture.

Usually, if 500 million people are doing something, you may want to pay attention to it. Yes, our industry is slow to pick up on technology but when you only need to craft 140 characters there isn't much of an excuse to not be tweeting. The microblog always asks the question, "What's happening right now?" It contains roughly 340 million tweets a day and 1.6 billion search queries per day.

So why else is Twitter worth paying attention to? It's a social network that allows you to build your personal brand. Plus, people may be talking about you or your company already, so here you can take control of your message.

To understand Twitter you need to know the basic terminology. Your profile is extremely important - it will identify you to the Twitter universe. However you identify yourself here will shape the conversations you have on the social network. Twitter's algorithm will even suggest people to follow based on your profile. Your "handle" is your Twitter name. I recommend making it your name. If you have a long name - shorten it. Ex. My handle is @DiPodaski. If you have a common name like, John W. Smith, try something like JWSmith22. A "hashtag" - aka # with text, is a grouping mechanism that anyone can create. Ex. If someone wants to create a conversation on Twitter about something momentary like a special event you might use the town name and initials for the event. Ex. For a grand opening event in Wellesley I might use "#WellesleyGO." One very important thing with hashtags - before you create one and start marketing it, do a search in Twitter first to be sure that it isn't being used by someone else around a different campaign. A "DM" means a direct message. This is essentially receiving a private message within Twitter. Messages can only be DM'd once someone is following you. A "RT" is a retweet, this is when someone tweets exactly what you tweeted.

To truly speak the tweet you need to maximize the 140 characters for the farthest reach. This includes doing searches to see what's trending on the social network, adding pictures, videos or links, mentioning other handles and including or creating hashtags. All of these items help you become part of a conversation. An example of speaking the tweet, "Learn how to speak the tweet from @DiPodaski in @NEREJ column #DishingSM pic.twitter.com/HOczGUiq." This example shows another handle, a hashtag and a picture.

Social Media Fun Fact: In January of 2013 a newborn was named "Hashtag" after the famous Twitter symbol.

Diana Podaski is marketing and social media manager for Linear Retail Properties, Burlington, Mass.

